

To the
Testimony
Senate Political Sub Committee
On
HB 1323

Good morning Chairman Burckhard and members of the committee. I am Lisa Clute, Executive Officer of First District Health Unit. First District provides local public health services to Bottineau, Burke, McHenry, McLean, Renville, Sheridan, and Ward counties.

I am in opposition to 1323. This bill eliminates an important tool in the public health tool chest in responding to a wide variety of situations that we address. My staff are required to wear the appropriate Protective Gear (including masks) when they respond to various environmental and disease threats such as hoarding situations, environmental threat assessments, some infectious disease assessments and treatment, and biohazard response etc. No one can predict what situations will threaten the health of the communities and individuals we serve.

This bill is a reaction to events that occurred during the response to Covid 19. Prior to mask mandates First District provided information on how to reduce the spread of this highly contagious disease by educating the public on all mitigation strategies. We provided education on how to appropriately utilize masks via press conferences, social media, and written materials.

Social media was inundated with misinformation by self-proclaimed experts on topics such as Infectious Disease, Personal Protection Equipment, and treatments. As the virus spread “out of control” local policy makers were left with few choices left to save lives, keep businesses going and kids in school. Most ND residents supported a mask mandate. It was a necessary action.

I encourage the Committee to look towards the future and not restrict a proven and effective mitigation tool for future responses. Public employees deserve and expect to be protected by employers’ policies. The public deserves actions that will protect their health when individuals choose not to follow recommendations provided by experts that are trained and have Doctorate degrees in infectious disease.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.